



GUIDELINES FOR OUT-OF-STATE PEACE OFFICERS SEEKING CRIMINAL JUSTICE EMPLOYMENT IN MONTANA APRIL 2004

Thank you for your inquiry regarding the potential for employment as a peace officer in Montana. Many of the officers now working in Montana began their law enforcement careers in other states. As a certified peace officer, you may be eligible to work as a law enforcement officer in Montana without having to retake basic training by challenging the Montana Law Enforcement Basic Equivalency.

— JOBS IN MONTANA —

In 2003, there were 1,979 sworn officers working for sheriff's offices and city police departments. Other sworn officers work for the Montana Highway Patrol, University Police, Airport Police, and other enforcement arms of local and state government.

While there is no central file regarding the annual rate of job openings for all of these agencies, the attendance rates at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy may provide an estimate of the numbers of new officers now being hired each year. Three 12 week Basic Course Sessions are held annually and about 112 new officers graduate from these programs. Most of these officers have already been hired by a law enforcement agency, but 5 – 10 individuals each year attend the Academy as "pre-service" students. These men and women complete their training on their own time and at their own expense in order to improve their own chances to be hired.

About 30 officers each year complete Equivalency Training at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy. Most of these individuals went to basic training in other states. Besides basic students and equivalency candidates, a few more officers are certified annually through other courses or agencies.

These figures indicate that about 150 new officers are hired in Montana each year.

— SALARIES IN MONTANA —

In 2003 the average annual salary for a new sheriff's deputy was \$27,661.59. The average annual salary for a new law enforcement officer working in a police department was \$26,417.18.

— EQUIVALENCY TESTING —

After being hired by a law enforcement agency in Montana, out-of-state officers must complete all components of equivalency testing within their **first year** of employment. To initiate equivalency testing, you or your department training officer must contact POST and arrange for a review of your training record. If POST finds that you are eligible for equivalency testing, they will notify the Academy and you will be contacted regarding the testing and training process. The equivalency test is offered three times each year. You will be scheduled to take the test on a date that is convenient for you and for your agency but it must be done within the first year of employment.

Equivalency testing and training is a five-step process:

1. Establishing **Eligibility** for certification through the Peace Officers Standards and Training Advisory Council (POST),
2. Completing the three part **Challenge Test** at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy: written, firearms and fitness,
3. Completing all aspects of Academy **Legal Equivalency Training**: orientation, distance learning, classroom training and final examination,
4. Completion of a twelve month **Agency Probation Period**,
5. Submission of a **POST Basic Application** signed by an agency administrator and including all required attachments.

In order to maintain powers of arrest, officers trained out-of-state must complete all components of the Equivalency Testing and Training Process within their first year of initial appointment as a peace officer in Montana (MCA 7-32-303).

The written equivalency test is derived from the final examination given after the Basic Course. It is a general test of terms and concepts common to law enforcement. It is not specific to Montana law. When you are scheduled to take the equivalency test, the Academy will provide you with some study materials and preparation guidelines.

Successful completion of the MLEA Equivalency Fitness Assessment based on the Cooper's Standards requires 40th percentile performance within the candidate's age and gender group for the following fitness categories: sit-ups, push-ups, one and one-half mile run, and sit and reach flexibility measure.

Remember, this is a testing process, not a training process. Your knowledge of general police practice and procedures will be examined. If you fail, you will have to retake the basic training in Montana in order to be certified.

— **EXCEPTIONS** —

There are certain exceptions affecting certification which you should be aware of.

- Reserve training is not recognized for POST certification in Montana. If you completed your basic training in a course designated for reserve officers, you will probably have to retake basic training in Montana.
- Candidates for the Montana Highway Patrol must attend the 16-week MHP recruit school unless they have previously attended and successfully completed the Montana Basic Law Enforcement Academy or possess a Montana Equivalency. In all cases, except graduates of the MHP Recruit School, a candidate for the MHP must attend six weeks of advanced training. For specific information regarding MHP recruiting please call 1-877-8-PATROL.
- If you have not worked as a peace officer for at least one year anytime during the preceding 60 months, you will have to retake basic training in order to be certified.
- Part time law enforcement officers must be certified to the same standards as full time officers.
- Police chiefs are subject to all of these certification requirements and guidelines.

- **CONCLUSION AND FURTHER INFORMATION** —

By reviewing these guidelines and staying in direct contact with the criminal justice hiring agencies in the jurisdictions where you would like to relocate, you will maximize your opportunities to find employment as a law enforcement officer. As elsewhere in the United States, law enforcement in Montana is a demanding occupation. If you are willing to dedicate your efforts towards long hours and hard work under difficult conditions, your application will be welcome in Montana.

Further information is available from the Montana Law Enforcement Academy (Under the Montana Department of Justice) and P.O.S.T. Council Staff (under the Montana Board of Crime Control)

— *HIRING AND THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS* —

The certification process for law enforcement officers in Montana begins only after an individual has been hired. As an officer with out-of-state training, you **MUST** be hired by a Montana law enforcement agency **BEFORE** you can obtain a Montana Basic Certificate.

You **MAY** be able to obtain written confirmation that your past training successfully qualifies you for equivalency testing in Montana. Written confirmation of eligibility for equivalency testing may help you as you search for a job. To request written confirmation, write a letter to:

**Peace Officers Standards and Training
3075 North Montana
PO Box 201408
Helena Montana 59620**

State your request and include copies of your basic certificate in another state, a copy of your Basic Training Academy Diploma, and proof of your employment history in other jurisdictions. If you have a training transcript from your state you may include that as well, or any other training information you believe would help determine your eligibility to challenge the basic equivalency in Montana.

There is no central file for local job announcements in Montana. You must make direct contact with the agency where you would like to be employed. It is your obligation to meet the established application deadlines and requirements for any jobs that are open. For your convenience you may refer to the below website under the Montana Board of Crime Control and select the “Directory of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Agencies” in Montana for names and addresses.

[Montana County Sheriffs](#)

[Montana City Police Departments](#)

[Montana State Agencies](#)

[Tribal Police Departments](#)

More information about criminal justice agencies or peace officer employment and certification may be obtained via the Internet web site for the Montana Board of Crime Control.

www.mbcc.mt.gov

Select POST